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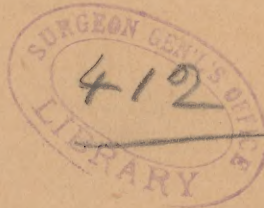
PHYSICAL TRAINING
OF
YOUTHFUL CRIMINALS.

BY

HAMILTON D. WEY, M. D.,

Physician to the New York State (Elmira) Reformatory.

A reprint of a paper read before the National Prison Association,
at Boston, July 18th, 1888.



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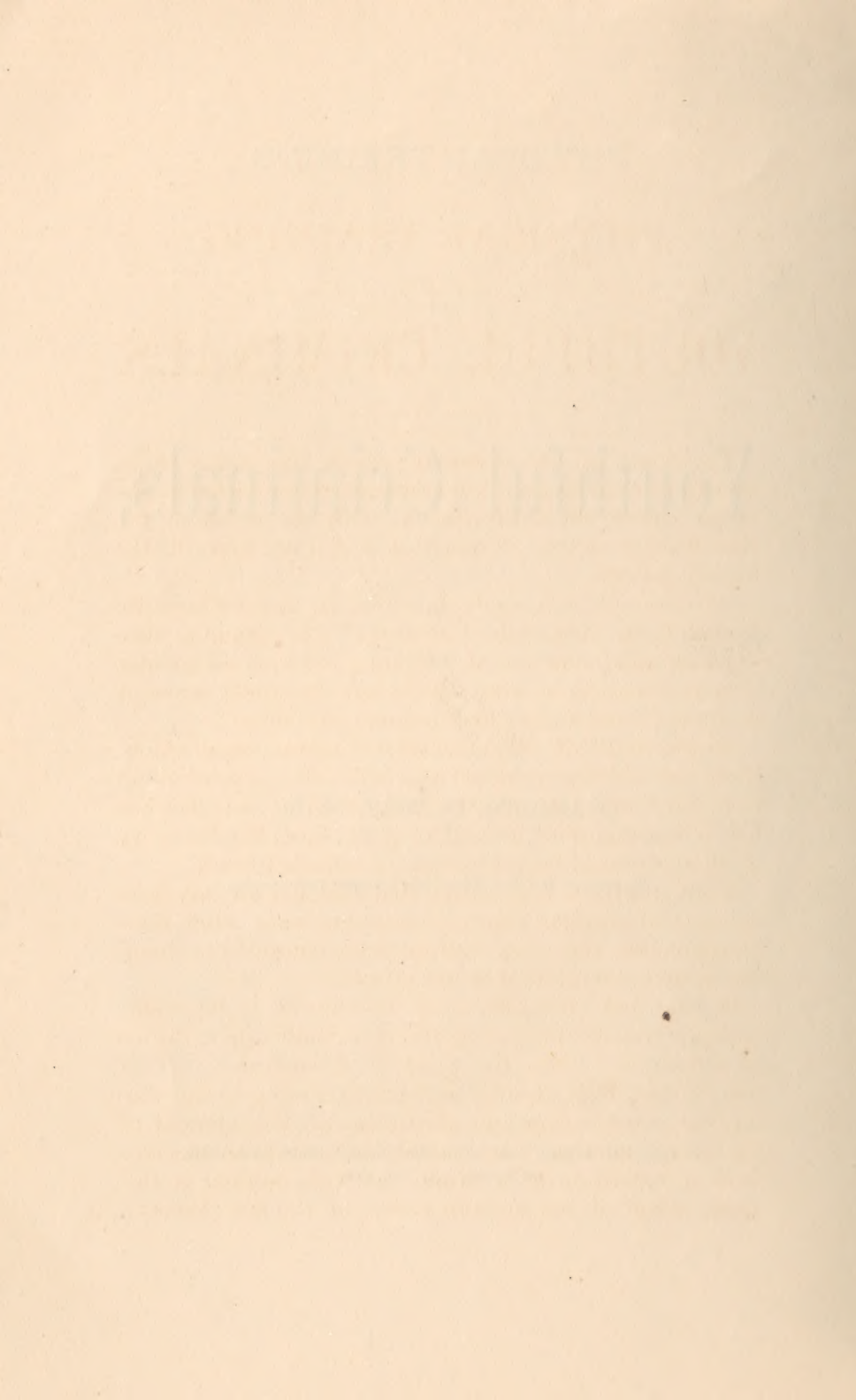
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The study of the criminal, which has come to be known as Criminology, has added another division to the broad science of Anthropology, with the result of the classification of the criminal as a distinct type of the human species.

Exception is to be made, however, of those whom the French term "criminals of occasion," who, tripping once or twice upon some moral stumbling-block, subsequently recover themselves, since almost any one under stress of peculiar circumstances may become a criminal.

As the result of their mental and moral organization, there are a certain number who will always be criminal in instinct and act, and the recognition of this fact has led to investigations having for their object the discovery of an anatomical basis of crime—a criminal brain.

There are those who affirm that this has already been done; and another class of observers who, while their views incline this way, refrain from committing themselves upon the ground of not proven.

Of the first class the most pronounced is Benedikt, who prefaces his work, "Anatomical Studies upon Brains of Criminals," with the tenet of Erasistrates—"That man thinks, feels, desires and acts according to the anatomical construction and physiological development of his brain"; adding, "An inability to restrain themselves from a repetition of a crime, notwithstanding a full appreciation of the superior power of the law (society),

and a lack of the sentiment of wrong through a clear perception of it, constitutes the two principal psychological characteristics of that class to which belong more than one-half of condemned criminals."

The proposition of Benedikt is—"The brains of criminals exhibit a deviation from the normal type, and criminals are to be viewed as an anthropological variety of their species, at least among the cultured races."¹ He regards the criminal as a burdened individual, bearing the same relation to crime as his next blood kin, the epileptic, and his cousin, the idiot, have to their encephalopathic condition and its results.

The second, or more conservative class of observers, opine that the average criminal is hampered by a defective organization, especially as it relates to his brain and nervous system, with a greater or less deficiency in moral sense, due to heredity and atavistic in character, or to environment and criminal surroundings, that in time blunt or destroy the moral nature, producing *de novo* an original criminal, who in turn transmits his irregular tendencies to his progeny.

It is the work of the cerebral anatomist to demonstrate that the brains of criminals are distinctive, that there is a criminal type, before the anatomical basis of crime can be accepted in its entirety. In our present state of knowledge it is not from the study of fissures and gyres alone that an absolutely fixed type of criminal brain can be determined, although a consideration of the asymmetrical and atypically asymmetrical brain is not to be ignored, but the more perfect studies must go deeper and further than this considering the depth of fissures, thickness of gray matter, and quality of tissue.²

He whose duties bring him in intimate contact with the criminal comes to recognize certain peculiarities of mind and body that characterize those who are of the criminal class; the latter seemingly being the outward and visible sign of an inward abbreviation, an anomaly of the mind—the brain and nervous system. These pe-

cularities are to be noted alike, though in varying degree, in the thief and thug gathered in from city slums and haunts of vice and the offender who has enjoyed a social status and acquainted with the amenities of a gentle life.

Generally he is undersized, his weight being disproportionate to his height, with a tendency to flat-footedness. He is coarse in fibre and heavy in his movements, lacking anatomical symmetry and beauty. The head is markedly asymmetrical with the facial lines coarse and hard, characteristic of a degenerative physiognomy. Among the 800 inmates of the Elmira Reformatory I do not believe there are one-half dozen who approach, or even approximate, the physical proportions of the typical man according to the scale of Dr. Sargent.

The mind and nervous system of the criminal is in harmony with his body in its abbreviation. His characteristics of character are peculiar and marked, being admirably described by Francis Galton in "Inquiries into Human Faculty." David said in his haste all men are liars: had he had knowledge of the criminal type he could have expressed himself with equal emphasis and after due deliberation.

Considering the criminal to be *sui generis*, and by criminal I refer to the average convict doing time in our prisons, it is not assuming too much, nor is it contrary to science to conclude, that the physical man criminal robbed of his fair proportions is the index of a degenerated cerebral architecture that found its expression in crime. Mr. Galton writes: "It is unhappily a fact that fairly distinct types of criminals breeding true to their kind have become established, and are one of the saddest disfigurements of modern civilization."³

The tendency in the past of the philanthropically inclined in dealing with the criminal and overcoming his abnormal inclinations and practices, has been largely through appeals to his better nature and playing upon his emotions. Owing to the changeableness of his mind,

and I am speaking of the youthful delinquent, his last impressions efface those that preceded them and will in turn be supplanted by their successors of to-morrow. He readily responds to the excitement of the passing hour, and as the strings are played upon that move his feelings he answers to the stimulus, expressing contrition for the past and hopes for a better future, if this he sees is desired; or repents and experiences a religious sentiment, a pardon's worth, if it will secure him prison favors or a release.

The volatility of his nature and unstableness of mind are such that all efforts to readjust him, made through the emotions, end in disappointment to the worker, subsequently furnishing merriment and amusement to the subject—and the player is played upon in turn.

Good and healthy sentiments cannot originate in a morbid mind that has found its expression in crime, whose dwelling place is a stunted frame, healthy only so far as the performance of the functions of merely animal life are concerned. The educational methods of the past commonly in vogue have been to train the mind and special senses, with a confidence conceived in ignorance that the body needed no other attention than food sufficient to supply it with needed energy, the setting aside of certain hours for sleep, and clothing to protect it from the vicissitudes of weather.

The popular opinion has been the brain is cultivated at the expense of muscle and muscle at the expense of brain, that a man cannot excel in both at the same time. The law of mutual dependence of the various organs has been overlooked and the mind—the brain—has been cultivated at the expense of physical deterioration. The body deteriorates not because it is a part of nature's scheme it should do so under intellectual growth, but in consequence of the neglect it has received and violation of certain inexorable laws. Plato said to train the mind and neglect the body was to produce a cripple. The pedagogue has considered body and mind as a duality

instead of a unity, and the physical basis of brain work has been overlooked.

In the training of an abnormal mind, be it criminal or otherwise, (and it goes without saying that the criminal mind is not normal), the most approved methods of education should be employed. In the training of defective minds, minds in defective or poorly developed bodies, the body should first be brought to the highest attainable degree of perfection. Proper food, regular hours for sleep, sanitary surroundings and the discontinuance of habits that stunt the body and blunt the mind, as the use of tobacco and narcotics, are not enough. Physical training, physical culture, is indicated.

In obedience to the dictates of the human sentiment abroad throughout the land the State has erected and maintains costly buildings for the insane; provides asylums for the deaf and dumb, the blind and feeble-minded, and seeks to correct their defects and ameliorate their condition. Its criminal wards it secludes, utilizes their labor, ministers to their necessities if they become sick, but beyond this fails to take cognizance of their physical state.

The defective body, the habitation of the imperfect mind, is considered only as it may become necessary to prop it up to prevent decline or dissolution. Physical training as an end to cerebral activity and mental increase, or to promote body growth and conformity to better types of the merely physical man is not yet included in the prison curriculum.

But I fancy some may say why train the criminal in athletics when the common round of daily task will suffice to furnish him with needful exercise. I answer, there is a certain class of dull minds in inert bodies to whom the task of shop is automatic drudgery, who without bodily improvement and mental quickening will all their lives be hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Athletics and physical training are not synonymous terms. The former implies and is a specialty of the

latter and finds its expression in boxing, rowing and the field sports, as base and foot ball, tennis and sprint running; sports that develop only certain muscles, largely those of the lower half of the body, or, where the upper limbs and trunk are employed, those of the right side; and entered into in a measure for the excitement that follows their public exhibition and the distinction attaching to the participant.

Physical training in its most literal sense is the cultivation of organic perfection of the human body in its entirety and an approximation to the physical proportions of a typical man. It is the correction of disparities in accordance with the law of adaptation and harmonious adjustment of parts.

Archibald Maclaren, than whom no one ever did more to separate physical education from athleticism and the taint of professionalism, wrote—"Brute force, brute strength, are terms we constantly hear used, despisngly, of bodily power when it is designed to contrast it with mental ability, just as we hear the holder of an opposite opinion, and possessor of opposite requirements, talk sneeringly of the 'mere scholar.' But they who speak thus err equally in their praise and in their blame. They seek to sever what were bound together in their very planning, if one may so speak on such a subject, of a living man; they disunite them, and then complain that the dissevered halves are of unequal value; they take the one and cultivate it exclusively, and neglect the other exclusively, and then make comparisons between them; forgetting that their fitness, each for the other, lay in the fair nurture of both, and in their mutual cultivation." ⁴

We are all acquainted with a class of criminal dullards and illiterates, a class where, seemingly, body and mind instead of acting reciprocally and for mutual benefit, have operated as a drag the one upon the other. Prison methods of the past have accomplished with such little more than a specified number of hours of work per day

and the observance of certain rules of government. I am here to-day to bespeak a different treatment for this class of unfortunates, a recognition of physical training as a factor in mental and moral growth.

The physical culture of these behind-hand ones should be undertaken during the period of bodily growth, when every organ, limb and tissue is in a plastic state, changing and capable of being changed. A systematic and rational education of the body causes improved blood to take the place of poor and vitiated, enabling the various organs to perform more and better work, begetting strong limbs and a shapely frame. The physical reconstruction of these dullards and sluggards becomes something more than the mere acquisition of muscle and brawn. It is the modification and changing to a better form a frame handicapped by the transmission of criminal tendencies or stunted and embarrassed in its growth by vicious habits and surroundings that finally found expression in crime.

That physical training has not been made part of the scheme in the management of this class of defects I believe to be due simply to the fact that the laws of physiology have been either lost sight of or ignored; and the mental side of the question of their readjustment obscured and hid the physical. "Mind and body should be viewed as the two well-fitting halves of a perfect whole, designed in true accord mutually to sustain and support each other." Physical education looking to mental quickening is in accordance with the laws of physiology. Mental development and culture ignoring the fact of a physical basis soon resolves itself into a study of pathology and morbid anatomy.

Says Dr. Sargent—"I hold that it (symmetry of form) has not only a moral significance, but also a physiological significance, and that the size, shape and structure of the body have a direct dynamic relation to all the vital organs, and appreciably influence the functions of the brain and nervous system." ⁵

The performance of gymnastic feats and tricks is neither desired nor aimed at. The object of physical training is not to make these men strong as much as to make them healthy and enduring.

While desirable, it is not absolutely necessary that special quarters should be provided for the work of physical training in prisons. The main corridor, if well lighted and ventilated, will answer every purpose, and the developing apparatus required can be placed against the wall so as not to become an obstruction or interfere with the passage of prisoners to and from the shops.

Free movements, those performed without the aid of apparatus, serve a purpose, a preliminary setting up, as many criminal illiterates are so densely stupid as to be unable to tell the right hand from the left. It is not by means of the most elaborate apparatus that the greatest results are obtained.

By free movements and dumb-bell exercises I was able to quicken eleven dullards so that they obtained an average marking in school of 74% during the five months I had them in charge, as against 45% for the preceding five months; and what is still better, upon the giving up of the class and the return of all to shop work and routine prison life, they maintained themselves at 71% for the same period of time without falling back to their former state of inertia and an average of 45%.

Among the inmates of the Elmira Reformatory the greatest physical deficiency and least resistive power is found in the respiratory apparatus. Pigeon breasts, imperfectly developed chests and stooping shoulders abound. During a period of eight years, with 26 deaths, 13, or 50%, were from diseases of the chest, not including affections of the heart. Upon more than one occasion, after a series of moral ups and downs incident to mastery of the lesson of self-control, it has seemed as if physical deterioration occurred coincident with moral and mental awakening. This physical decline cannot be charged to local surroundings, but is rather in accordance with the

invariable law of nature that the strength of the weakest part determines the strength of the whole. The mental and moral struggle but brought to light the latent weakness of the physical man. Had it been possible for these young men and boys to have received physical education early in life their bodies would not have failed them at the time of mental development.

Our reformatories, houses of refuge and correction, and orphan asylums are the schools in which a class, not numerically small if physically so, are receiving their education. These children of the public are greatly in arrears physically, due to conditions they are in no wise responsible for, but, if properly treated, possess capacity for improvement in comparison with their requirements. It is not sufficient to train them in habits of industry with attention to mental and moral needs; but of paramount importance is the systematic culture of the body, that is, exercise and training most suitable for individual requirements, systematized and carried out under the supervision of a competent teacher.

The actual demands of such a course need not interfere with the routine and discipline of any institution. Four lessons a week of a half hour each, continued for a period of six months, will cause the caved-in abdomen, the half-used lungs, the pipe-stem legs and arms to match, the pimply and unhealthy skin to all recede before the evolution of the vigorous boy, well built and self-confident, whose brain is fed by rich and life-giving blood.

The reply to Maclaren of the soldier who had passed through a brief course of training at the gymnasium at Warley Barracks is as pregnant in meaning as many a sermon. "‘I asked him if he felt any stronger for his practice?’ ‘I feel twice the man I did, sir,’ was the reply: on my further asking him what he meant by that—‘I feel twice the man I did for anything a man can be set to do.’"

One hour per week at Radley College, with school boys

under ordinary conditions of health and growth, was all that Maclaren required, and two hours at Bowdoin under Sargent's training produced results which, tabulated, showed as was never shown before what systematized exercise could accomplish.

While one and two hours a week under ordinary conditions of mind, health and growth can bring about such results; and under a similar scheme is Hartwell at Johns Hopkins and Sargent in Cambridge working to develop body coincident with mind, that education may be of practical value; there are extreme cases of arrested mental and corporal growth requiring greater length of time. In the case of the criminal dunce and those not far removed from mental imbecility two hours a week are not enough. The material to work upon is not so promising or responsive as is the college boy. With my first class of criminal dullards twelve hours a week were none too many. They were in the beginning antagonistic to my efforts, and was necessary to put them daily through their paces, that the efforts of to-day might not be neutralized by the stolidity of the morrow. And the five months thus spent with them exclusively in physical and mental development yielded results that compensated for the time and labor, as the mind grew apace with the body, while the latter acquired a healthier tone.

The selection of a teacher is a matter of primary importance, calling for the same consideration as would be bestowed upon an application to instruct in mathematics or the rudiments of a trade. Not every broken-down gymnast and tumbler is competent for the work of physical education, but the choice should fall upon a man who has comprehension of the physiology of exercise, discernment to perceive wherein his pupils are deficient, and possessed of broader ideas than the cultivation of muscle for strength alone.

The bath and dietetics remain to be mentioned as adjuncts to physical training.

Cleanliness, while essential to health in contributing

to the proper performance of the functions of the skin and the maintenance of the latter in its reciprocal relations to other organs, is not the sole office of the bath. Another object as well is accomplished in the stimulation of the peripheral nerves and secondary action on cerebral centers.

The ordinary tub bath contributes to cleanliness but fails to produce cerebral impress, as its workings are not sufficiently far-reaching. But more comprehensive in the scope of its action is the Turkish bath with its sweating room, cold plunge, needle, vertical and lateral shower, douche, and massage, with stimulation of the entire cutaneous system together with passive motion and articular exercise.

It may be urged that the Turkish bath is a decided innovation in the way of prison equipment, the first cost of which is virtually prohibitive. I answer that it is an innovation and the introduction of a means to an end that has not yet obtained in the work of readjustment of the criminal. Whatever advances have been made in the treatment of the malefactor were innovations at the time of introduction, in that they were departures from or elaborations of existing methods; and the community blindly committed to certain methods because no precedent exists in their midst for change of treatment, is incompetent to care for its derelicts and erring ones.

A modification of the Turkish bath to meet every indication can be effected at small outlay. Every institution has, or should have, a large bath room, well lighted and easy of access, with tile or marble floor. Such a room with but little labor can be furnished with appliances that for all practical purposes will permit of the giving of the bath. To existing water and steam connections the shower and douche can be attached, the same being readily made by the resident plumber, if he possesses ordinary ingenuity. Two or three radiators are usually in disuse or stored away, and these can be brought into service to furnish the vapor bath, or additional coils of

steam pipe added to those already in service sufficient to raise the temperature to 120° F. or higher. In addition a marble slab six feet in length by two in width, supported by legs, to serve as a table upon which to spray, douche and manipulate the subject, and the elements of the Turkish bath, minus the plunge, are at command; not so elaborate or costly as encountered in the cities, but answering their purpose in the work of physical training without interfering with the stationary tubs and the general usefulness of the room.

Noting the effect produced in individuals must determine the frequency of the bath, as no rule as to how often it may be administered without physical deterioration can be laid down, as each case must be a law unto itself. But it may be broadly stated that more criminals, and for that matter those in fair standing in society, have suffered to their detriment from too little rather than too great indulgence in the bath.

Under the operation of physical training I have found better work performed and results obtained when a special dietary was employed than when the regular prison fare was given without restriction as to quantity. The object of food is to furnish nourishment to the body and energy to perform well the work in hand. The pleasures of the palate are but a stimulus to proper nutrition, whose gratification largely in excess of the needs of the body leads to mental and physical hebetude. In the physical training of the criminal, with all the opportunities afforded for controlling his vicious habits and tendencies, the sensuous demands of taste should be held in check, lest the stomach get away with the brain. A writer has recently observed—"The abdominal muscle is the test of condition. Some people never control it, and from youth to age the belly leads the man. When the abdominal muscle gets the better of a man he has said good-bye to his athletics." ⁶

Dr. Fothergill has truly said—"To swallow food and to digest it are not one and the same. It is what is di-

gested—not merely what is eaten—which has to do with nutrition.”

The quantity of food necessary to maintain a good physical condition bears a relation to the work performed and the individual. An arbitrary rule cannot be laid down; we must be content with an approximation, bearing in mind the fact that the motive power of different individuals will not accomplish with the same amount of fuel the same amount of work.

It has been wisely said—“The appetite of youth needs not the stimulus of food tempting to the palate.” The writer might have added, it is better to cease eating before satiety is reached than to continue till a sense of oppression is produced. The average man or boy, if left to his own inclinations, will eat largely in excess of the needs of his economy until fatness and softness are produced, which, as O'Reilly observes, are symptoms of disease or sensuous expression.

Plain, unstimulating food, with a proper combining of animal and vegetable matter, is indicated.

With boys in the plastic age, and especially those in training for physical betterment and mental strengthening, I would protest against the routine use of tea and coffee at the evening and morning meal, usually of such a strength as to be a stimulant. Milk should enter into the dietary, being regarded as a solid food rather than a beverage—a pint of rich milk being nearly the equivalent in nutritive properties to a pound of steak. In bread and butter and milk there is contained all the elements requisite for life and energy. Starch as body fuel; albumen for tissue; repair in the gluten; earthy salts, especially if the bread be made of whole flour; and the butter, the fat, which partly is burnt as a body fuel, partly engaged in the building up of healthy tissue.⁷

The work of physical education, to be successful, should be carried on in a three-fold line; physical development—muscular amplification and structural enlargement, not mere increase in size but increase in structure,

to arrest defects transmitted or acquired through environment or defective modes of living; the bath as a stimulus and means of bringing the various members of the body into greater harmony; and a dietary suitable to supply energy of the kind best adapted to the adjustment of mind to body.

The primary education of many criminals and defects should be the education of the body and the building up and strengthening of the brain. To force or develop a brain whose habitation is attenuated and architecturally unharmonious, whose nervous system is vitiated, is to produce a mental dyspeptic, who, while he may, by the brightness of his work, give evidence for a time of promise, yet under the pressure of so-called education and contact with the crowding world his course is like the flame that flickers and gives an increased light before it dies down and is extinguished.

The mental foundation of such an one is built upon the sand and not the enduring rock. Poorly fitted for the work of life and embarrassed physically, when the day of tension and trial comes it finds the mind crammed with scholastic lore and moral platitudes in excess of its physical strength, ill prepared to meet the exigencies of the hour; and a lapsing back into a condition seven-fold worse than the first state, or insanity and suicide, as in the case of the poet Chatterton, terminate the scene.

But first let the scheme of training or reformation embrace the bringing to the highest attainable degree of perfection the physical man, and coincidently the brain will participate in the work of physical improvement and the mind, mellowed and secure upon a firm and enduring basis, will afford a soil wherein the germs of morality and principles set forth in the decalogue may find lodgment and fructify, bringing forth in good season fruit, it may be ten, twenty or an hundred fold; an accomplishment that in physical and mental crudeness could never have been brought about through appeals to the emotions.

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- (1) Brains of Criminals, Moriz Benedikt, 1881.
 - (2) Study of the Brains of Paranoiacs, Criminals, Idiots and Negroes, Charles K. Mills, M. D., 1886.
 - (3) Inquiries into Human Faculty, Francis Galton, 1881.
 - (4) Physical Education, Archibald Maclaren, Oxford, 1885.
 - (5) Scribner's Magazine, July, 1887.
 - (6) Ethics of Boxing and Manly Sports, John Boyle O'Reilly, 1888.
 - (7) Manual of Dietetics, J. Milner Fothergill, 1886.

